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AUTHOR Roth, Rita
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ABSTRACT

This working paper is a report of a study of the meanings 10 children derived from the experience of being taught to read in first grade. The study is based on a series of classroom observations and conversations with the children, their parents and teachers over a 10-month period in two first grade classrooms of a public elementary school in an upper-middle class suburb. Particular attention is given to the way teachers' actions and interactions are connected to children's developing conceptions of themselves as learners and to their perceptions of school learning. Schooling acts of teachers, set out in the form of dilemmas dealing with control, knowledge (curriculum) and societal issues, are investigated to explicate teachers' classroom behavior and its impact on their pupils. Two first grade teachers who used the same basal reading program but appeared to present distinctly different learning environments participated in the study. Contrasts in teachers' orientations toward control (use of Question Chairs, etc.) and children's views of their experience in school (deciding what is "reading" and what is "work") are reported to illustrate connections between teachers' dilemma resolutions and meanings pupils take from the school setting. Because of the preliminary nature of the analysis, no attempt is made to report findings. (Author/RH)

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A Study of the Meanings Ten Children Take From the Schooling Process as They are Taught to Read in the First Grade: A Preliminary Report

by
Rita Roth

For Presentation at the Convention of
The American Educational Research Association
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Overview and Problem Statement

This working paper is a report on a study of the meanings ten children take from the experience of being taught to read in first grade. The study is based on a series of classroom observations and conversations with the children, their parents and teachers over a ten month period in two first grade classrooms of a public elementary school in an upper-middle class suburb. I look at how these children's perceptions of reading differ at the outset and how they change over the course of the first grade year. By direct observation and from what the teachers and children say, I attempt to uncover the impact of teachers' actions -- their daily classroom decisions regarding schooling and reading instruction -- on the meanings children come to have about reading as a school subject.

This is not a study of the effectiveness of reading instruction; of learning theory related to reading; nor is it an effort to study reading competence. Rather, it is a study of the meanings that accompany and are transmitted through reading instruction.

From another point of view, this can be seen as a case study of cultural transmission, i.e. of how knowledge is transferred, reproduced and transformed. Schools, as agents of our culture, select what to teach from what we value as 'knowledge'. What is selected, the way in which it is taught by teachers and received by learners influences cultural continuity and change. Children come into contact with the institutionalized or public knowledge of our culture in first grade. Here, children develop impressions about what the culture values as learning and how we are to go about learning it.

To conduct the analysis, I use the "dilemmas of schooling" approach (Berlak & Berlak, 1980) based on George Herbert Mead's social behaviorism. The dilemma language is used to describe the differences and similarities in teachers' behavior, and it

provides a way of analyzing the meanings children take from it. The dilemma language is a set of terms which refer to control, knowledge (curriculum) and social justice as seen in the schooling process.

This study focuses on a particular context and group of children in order to illuminate the consequences of teachers' acts and the range of these consequences as revealed by the children. I am hopeful that it will help clarify the connections between everyday schooling practices and the schools' role in setting out society's priorities, i.e. in providing for continuity and change. Particular attention is given to the way teachers' actions and interactions are connected to children's developing conceptions of themselves as learners and to their perceptions of school learning. In a very practical sense, the study can serve to clarify and inform -- to provide considerations for policy makers and curriculum developers.

I form the problem under study as the question:

> What meanings do ten children take with respect to control, knowledge and social justice as they are taught to read in first grade?

Key Terms Defined

My intention here is to provide brief definitions of the study's key terms to clarify their use in this working paper. They receive further elaboration as the description proceeds.

In this study the term, "experience" has reference to the overall effect of being in the first grade and becoming literate. It will be used to mean ". . .the total impact of the school on inmates, how they negotiate their day, their relationships, the requirements made of them and the repercussion for their lives and self-concepts both while at school and more permanently" (Hammersly & Woods, 1977,p.21).

I use the phrase, "the schooling process" to refer to how education is taking place. It is more concerned with the institution of school and the relation of individuals to it than to the result of schooling (Hammersley & Woods, 1977).

The "meanings children take" refers to the sense children make of the schooling process and the experience of being taught to read.

The term, "reading" refers to the process of connecting decoded written symbols and their meanings to one's personal knowledge.

A Brief History of the Study

The Origin of the Study

As children start their first full year in public school, they begin a twelve year period intended as basic preparation for adult life in our culture. The central part of this preparation is the acquisition and application of literacy.

During my fifteen years of teaching beginning reading in public elementary school, I was struck by the strong feelings children place on this process and by the changes I saw in them as they were schooled. In the lives of the children of our culture, the first grade is perceived as a major event. Entering what children often call "real school" appears to represent a long awaited moment that holds much promise. It is a bittersweet transition from the world of the young child into the world of the student. Here, the child officially learns to read -- a first step toward acquiring the 'knowledge' our society sees as significant.

During these years, I became convinced that learning to read plays a pivotal role in establishing children's conceptions of themselves as learners, of school learning and of learning in general. I was touched by the powerful impression reading success (and failure) appeared to have on children, their families and their teachers. This study grew out of a continuing interest in the effects of the schooling process on young children as they experience the process of being taught to read.

Reading as Critical Literacy

Over time, the word, "literacy" has become a catchall term. I have found a report of a committee of inquiry appointed by the British government, A Language for Life (1975), helpful in sorting out my use of the term as it relates to reading. The report defines reading three ways. The first, "A response to graphic signals in terms of the words they represent" (p.79) is based on the committee's interpretation of Fries (1962) which views "the teaching of reading [as] largely a matter of develop-

ing the child's ability to respond to letters and spelling patterns." (p.79). The second, "A response to text in terms of the meanings the author intended to set down" (p.79) includes the first, i.e. it builds on decoding by adding the component, meaning. The committee bases this definition on Goodman's (1970) view that reading requires a "reconstruction of the author's meaning." (p.79). Decoding and comprehending the author's intent are implicit in the third definition: "A response to the author's meanings in terms of all the relevant previous experience and present judgements of the reader." (p.80). Following Gray (1956) the committee sees this third conception of reading as ". . .more than a reconstruction of the author's meanings. It is the perception of those meanings within the total context of the relevant experiences of the reader." (p. 79, the committee's emphasis). The third definition invokes active participation on the part of the reader. It allows for the possibility of examining and exploring alternatives; of questioning what is read; of critique. The third definition describes literacy as I use it. It connects formalized, "school knowledge" to informal, "out-of-school knowledge", i.e. unites personal experience with public knowledge, negotiating an exchange of meaning. This enables one to see alternatives, it increases the power to become critically aware, to be more able to create, as well as reproduce the society (Freire, 1975). This study represents an effort to connect a particular curriculum theory, i.e. reading as critical literacy, to an empirical study.

Theoretical Background of the Study

My intention here is to extablish the study's connection to George Herbert Mead's social behaviorism. In so doing, I hope to clarify my use of the term, meaning.

Following Berlak and Berlak (1980), this study is based on a dialectic interpretation of Mead's behaviorism. Mead's concept of the act assumes a unity of thought and action, rather than their distinction into separate entities. This view of behavior is one of continuous transformation. As teachers go about teaching six year olds to read, their decisions to act in particular ways rather than others (whether or not they are consciously aware of it) evolve simultaneously from a

thought/action base. The impact of these decisions over time can lead to particular meanings which influence children's perceptions of schooling and literacy.

In this study, I use the term, meaning as conceptualized by Mead and interpreted by Berlak and Berlak (1980).

> The central factor in the adjustment of individuals to environment is 'meaning'. Meaning arises and lies within the field of relation between the gesture of a given organism and the subsequent behavior of this organism by that gesture. (Mead, 1934, pp. 75-76, emphasis added)

For Mead "meaning is . . .a relation between certain phases of the social act; it is not an 'idea' as traditionally conceived. Meaning is ". . .not a process going on in the mind. . .it is an external, overt, physical or physiological process going on in the actual field of social experience." (Mead, 1934, pp. 74 and 79). As such, meaning can be observed. His view of the self as reflexive or self-interacting makes it possible to investigate meaning through explanations of subjects themselves. For the purposes of this study, meanings will refer to the sense children make of the schooling process and the experience of being taught to read.

Research Approach

The approach used in this study is an outgrowth of what is generally known as "interpretive" research (Schutz, Garfinkel, Goffmann, etc.) and what Brian Fay (1975) calls "critical social science". It is based on the notion that the observer interprets intentional action, that the action observed occurs within a given context, that actors share certain basic conceptions or meanings, and that they act in terms of these meanings. This approach is concerned with the desires and "felt needs" (Fay, 1975, p.94) of individuals. The researcher attempts to understand the actor -- to see from the actor's own point of view. In critical social science there is an awareness that many people's actions are caused by conditions over which they have no control, and that "the unexpected, but not accidental consequences" which result need to be revealed (p.94). Another characteristic of the critical social science approach is that it sees as basic the connection between social theory and social practice. Although this connection can be made in other forms of social science

inquiry (frequently as implicit), it is seen as a starting point in critical social science.

To carry out the study in a critical social science mode, I utilize the "dilemmas of schooling" language (Berlak and Berlak, 1980). This "language of schooling acts" is made up of sixteen terms which are set out in the form of dilemmas. They are broken into three subsets: those that deal with control, with knowledge (curriculum), and with societal issues.

[Insert list of dilemmas about here]

> The 'control' dilemmas are used to map the range and depth of teachers' control over children. They do not themselves formulate the substantive issues that lie behind differing patterns of control. The 'curriculum' set focuses on the contradictions implicit in the transmission of knowledge and ways of knowing. The 'societal' set focuses on the contradictions in the meaning of social justice that are implicit in schooling activity.
> (Berlak and Berlak, 1980, p.)

These terms provide a useful and unique vehicle for portraying the tensions that operate within and upon teachers daily. As a language of schooling acts, the dilemmas help to explicate teachers' classroom behavior and its impact on their pupils. By tracing patterns of teachrs' resolutions to the dilemmas of schooling, I hope to clarify the meanings the children in this study take from the schooling process as they are taught to read -- meanings with respect to control, knoweldge, and social justice.

The Setting and Procedures

Two first grade classrooms of a public elementary school located in an upper-middle class suburb of a mid-western metropolitian area comprise the setting for this study. Constraints for learning to read appear to be at a minimum, i.e. it is an affluent suburb where home and school appear to share common educational goals. The two first grade teachers are both highly regarded by the school and community. They are each in their mid-forties; have about fifteen years of teaching experience; use the same basal reading program. They teach in classrooms which are virtually identical in size, room arrangement, resources and number of children. And yet, they

The Dilemmas of Schooling

The Control Dilemmas

Teacher v. Child Control (Time)
Teacher v. Child Control (Operations)
Teacher v. Child Control (Standards)
Whole Child v. Child as Student (Realm)

The Societal Dilemmas

Childhood Continuous v. Childhood Unique
Equal Allocation of Resources v. Differential Allocation
Equal Justice Under Law v. Ad Hoc Application of Rules
Common Culture v. Sub Group Consciousness

The Curriculum Dilemmas

Child as Person v. Child as Client
Personal Knowledge v. Public Knowledge
Knowledge as Content v. Knowledge as Process
Knowledge as Given v. Knowledge as Problematical
Intrinsic v. Extrinsic Motivation
Learning is Holistic v. Learning is Molecular
Each Child Unique v. Children Have Shared Characteristics
Learning is Social v. Learning is Individual

appear to present two distinct learning environments to their pupils.

Procedure for the study was discussed with the two first grade teachers and their principal. We established a limit on the number of children who would take part as well as the frequency and duration of my visits. All parents of entering first graders received a description of the study and an invitation to have their child participate. We (the teachers, the principal and I) made a random selection from those responding and placed one-half in each classroom. Ten first graders from a total of approximately fifty became primary subjects.

The source of data collected before, during and after the first grade year, came from both participant observation and informal, taped interview.

[Insert list of contacts about here]

I observed the children through the full day's schedule, including the lunch period, recess and lessons with auxillary staff, i.e. music, art and library. The interviews were scheduled to follow observation days so that reference could be made to observed classroom behavior.

The interviews centered around the school experience with questions and probes that evolved from a prepared focus. Although partially structured, they were contingent upon what grew out of the dialogue, and so, were more conversations than interviews. The choice of informal conversations over the formal interview stemmed, in part, from an attempt to establish a personal relationship with each child.

The interviews with adults were also informal. The teachers' interviews provided access to their rationale for observed dilemma resolutions and served to depict their view of the children. The principal's interviews added insight into the school's perspective about reading, the teachers as individuals and as educators, the children, and the community which the school serves. The parent interviews served to let them know me and the study, to tap their view of and expectations for their child's first grade year, and to provide an image of the child's out-of-school life.

In this way, I attempt to assempbe a composite image of the perspectives of ten children -- their view of being taught to read in first grade. I hope to gain

a fuller understanding of the impact of teachers' patterns of resolution to the dilemmas of schooling as seen in the meanings children take regarding control, knowledge and social justice over the course of the first grade year.

Sample Analysis of Data

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the link between teachers' resolutions to schooling dilemmas and the meanings children take from the school experience over the first grade year. The illustration has two parts. In the first, I use the "dilemmas of schooling language" to analyze observational notes of a reading work period in each classroom in September. I then discuss one child's account of first grade at two points: before the school year begins, and in September. The illustration employs the four control dilemmas only.

An analysis based on excerpts of data which are removed from the context of the study itself is necessarily limited. Because the illustration is based on partial transcriptions of data (observational notes and taped conversations) it can give only a partial picture of the teachers' patterns of resolution and their impact on children. The one morning described below, then, does not presume to draw a comprehensive view of each teacher's schooling practice. Nor does the partial account of one child's view assume to portray, in any definitive sense, the meanings she may take from experiencing first grade. The sample is further limited by the fact that I make no attempt here to elaborate on the unintended meanings children take from the schooling experience. Still, it is my hope that the discussion of these data excerpts will serve to illustrate the impact of teacher behavior on the meanings children take in relation to control, to knowledge, and social justice as they are taught to read in school. I present the sample analysis following a brief discussion of the control dilemmas.

The Control Dilemmas

The control dilemmas depict the pulls teachers feel toward control and autonomy in their classrooms. They refer to the degree of teacher and child control over time (when), operations (how), standards (how well) and realm (area of focus).

NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF CONTACTS

Before School Starts	September	January	May	After School Closes
		Conversations		
1 with each child	1 with each child	1 with each child	1 with each child	1 with each child
1 with each child's parent				1 with each child's parent
1 with Mrs. Reiss	1 with Mrs. Reiss	1 with Mrs. Reiss	1 with Mrs. Reiss	1 with Mrs. Reiss
2 with Miss Orlette	1 with Miss Orlette	1 with Orlette	1 with Orlette	1 with Orlette
1 with the principal	1 with the principal	1 with the principal	1 with the principal	1 with the principal
2 with principal and both teachers			1 with principal and both teachers	
		Full Day School Observations		
	Miss Orlette's class	Miss Orlette's class	Miss Orlette's class	
	Mrs. Reiss's class	Mrs. Reiss's class	Mrs. Reiss's class	

> Each of the four control dilemmas represents in language, conflicting tendencies to act arising from within the teacher and the objective situation toward, on the one hand, teacher taking control of the situation, and on the other, toward encouraging children's autonomy. (Berlak and Berlak, 1980, p.)

The influences which affect teachers' inclinations to resolve dilemmas stem from various sources. They include factors in teachers' personal histories as well as factors in the immediate school setting. As a result, teachers' actions often display diverse decisions about autonomy and control in their classrooms. These apparent inconsistencies reflect the pulls operating on teachers daily. Over time, as they teach, patterns of resolution begin to emerge. By noting the exceptional as well as the dominant resolutions to these dilemmas, one can begin to grasp the reflexivity of the schooling act.

Resolutions to the control dilemmas are manifested in the locus of control. Is it the teacher or the child who controls when to begin or how long to continue an activity? What is the frequency and nature of child initiated interaction? In other words, how much participation is the child allowed in control of time, standards, operations and realm for his/her learning and conduct?

I now turn to the sample analysis to illustrate the use of the dilemma language. The discussion centers on one child's view of first grade over time (based on transcriptions of taped interviews) and on one reading work period in each classroom during the third week of school (based on observational notes) using the control dilemmas as a descriptive and analytic tool.

Reading Work Time in Mrs. Reiss's Room

Mrs. Reiss's resolutions to the control dilemmas are predominantly in favor of teacher rather than child control during this morning session. With some exceptions the notes present a consistent pattern. This is evident in relation to control of time. Before the school day begins, Mrs. Reiss places a worksheet on each child's desk so children can begin to work as soon as they get off the bus. From what we see happening here, Mrs. Reiss clearly expects work to be completed the day it is assigned. For example, as

soon as George walks into the room, he is set to work completing yesterday's unfinished tasks. Also, she says to Victor and Scott, "You did not practice your reading? You have to do the same pages again tomorrow." Mrs. Reiss's explicit directions about when and how long to work at a task indicate her preference to control "begin time" and "duration time". For example, after Victor completes assignments, he checks with the teacher to verify that what he does next meets her approval: "Can I read in my new book now?" When Zia chooses to do another coloring work sheet, Mrs. Reiss says, "Zia, do some other work first before doing another one of those." Also, immediately after another child puts his finished papers into a folder on the teacher's table, she says to him, "Now, write numbers to 100." Incidents such as these imply that children in her classroom have little control over their time.

Teacher control also appears to dominate operations. The notes indicate Mrs. Reiss's expectation for thoroughly completed work done quietly and fast. Children are told how they are to work: "Stop talking, Scott and Victor!"; "Brad! sit down. Brad, at your seat, please!" "You will work hard and you will work fast, won't you?" Directions for how the morning work period progresses are explicit: "Read in your book three times, then sign up to read with Mrs. Reiss. We have two Question Chairs. If you have a question you sit on the chairs. Wait until Mrs. Reiss calls you for your answer." "Cassandra, don't waste so much time. Cassandra, if I were you I'd hurry up a bit, huh?", etc. There is one exception to the predominance of teacher control in relation to operations noted in the morning session. Mrs. Reiss does not intrude on the children who are taping their lunch money to the chalk board for safe keeping. This is one of the few events of the morning that progresses in less than a businesslike manner although they do not talk as they go about it. Edward tapes his money three times and writes his name four times, erasing until it looks right to him. The children begin this operation without getting permission from the teacher, they do not ask

her if they may use the tape. They stay at the chalkboard until they want to leave. This apparent inconsistency could indicate the pulls Mrs. Reiss feels in relation to the development of autonomy in her pupils, at least as regards operations. The dominant resolutions to the operations dilemma, however, are in favor of teacher control.

Similarly, Mrs. Reiss's resolutions to the standards dilemma are largely toward teacher control. During this morning session, she can be heard saying, "I hope you read better than you did yesterday!"; "That's good. See, you only have a few of these wrong. That is better than before." When Victor says he does not know what the word 'the' looks like, and so cannot spell or find it in his story, Mrs. Reiss's expectation that he will find it infers her standard for his reading work. The teacher's standards for the morning session are shared with the whole group at the close of the morning when she speaks to the class, complimenting some children and reprimanding others. From what we see in these notes, Mrs. Reiss tends to determine and maintain control of standards during the reading work period.

In the dilemma, whole child v. child as student, teacher control appears to focus on the child as student, i.e., the intellectual growth of the child seems to be Mrs. Reiss's first concern, although she does show some variations. This tends to give the room a formal feeling that manifests itself in a quiet, business-like atmosphere. Here, the line between teacher and child is clearly drawn, e.g., when giving directions to the class, she refers to herself as "Mrs. Reiss". The teacher's interactions with children are direct, explicit and primarily formal. Since Mrs. Reiss insists George remain in the room while the rest of the group attends music class, she apparently feels that completion of work assignments outweighs his need for aesthetic development. She repeatedly asks Victor and Scott to stop conversing as they work, cutting off the social development they migh gain from their interaction. Bobby's need for social interaction at recess is also subordinated to assigned tasks, as is his physical need for lunch on time with the class. When Cassandra reads a book from

home, Mrs. Reiss says, "Put that away and do your reading. . ." inferring that she will not allow alternatives that stem from the non-school part of a child's life into the work period. During the reading group, although she is establishing the meaning of the word, 'hit', Mrs. Reiss ignores Charlie's comment,"I hit a home run!" showing a clear decision to focus on the child as student and to bypass Charlie's personal experience. Later, her discussion with the entire class about work that has been completed during the morning appears to focus on child as student, since it does not take into account the emotional realm of children who may find it difficult or embarrassing to have their work publicly discussed. Similarly, she does not talk to individuals about being quiet, but reminds them publicaly. However, Mrs. Reiss puts aside her focus on child as student when allowing Bonnie to miss recess because she has a cold. In spite of the fact that her work is not done, Mrs. Reiss permits Bonnie to go to lunch on time, presumably because of a concern for her well-being. In this apparent inconsistency, we can see an indication of the pulls operating within Mrs. Reiss toward expanding her focus (a concern for the intellectual realm of her pupils) to include the physical realm as well.

Reading Work Time in Miss Orlette's Room

The locus of control in Miss Orlette's morning session rests largely with the teacher, although she shares control in several areas. In regard to time, Miss Orlette's resolutions tend to lean toward giving children some control, however it is she who maintains control of time throughtout the morning. She permits her children to remain outdoors for an unscheduled recess until all their buses arrive. Miss Orlette appears to let the children control their rate of work. The notes show no direct reference to how fast she expects work to be completed or when it is to be done. There is no mention of completing unfinished work. "Begin" and "duration" time appear to be child controlled, i.e. children are not seen asking when they may begin a task or whether they have finished a task. The only reference to time is clean

up in preparation for lunch when Miss Orlette says, "Boys and girls freeze. Look at the clock. . ." On this morning, at least, she does not seem to connect work tasks with time.

Miss Orlette clearly sets standards during the morning. In reference to reading practice, she asks children, "Have you mastered it?" She explains what she means by reading "mastery" when talking to Billy, "Do you see a picture in your head?" and in working with Karen, "Just tell me in your own words. . .Show me where it says that. That might have happened, but I don't think the writer said that. . .Now, do you know what happened? Good." She asks a group of eight children to watch as Carl works, "It's exciting when someone masters something." Because she asks children, "Have you mastered it?" may indicate she wants them to learn to set this standard for themselves, and so share in its control. In regard to standards of conduct, Miss Orlette's resolutions are largely for teacher control. Jim must miss music class because his past behavior there has not met her standard. She allows him some control by giving him time to think and formulate alternatives for himself, rather than say exactly what her standard of conduct is. It is the children who control the amount of talk and noise level during work time -- up to a point. The teacher steps in when the noise and the talking go beyond her standard: "It's good to laugh and good to have fun, but not during work time. Everytime I looked up you were talking. Now, please, not so much talking." And again, later, a child is asked to stand under the clock for one minute because he has been too noisy. This illustrates the conflicting pulls Miss Orlette may feel in regard to autonomy and control of conduct during the work period: children need to talk, yet children should not talk too much at work time. Talk at work time, then, is only mentioned these two times in the morning session, indicating most children understand what Miss Orlette means when she says, ". . .not so much talking."

In the dilemma, teacher v. child control: operations, Miss Orlette shares

some degree of control with the children. The morning session shows children controlling the sequence in which they do the assignments in their folders. They may move about and visit quietly as they work. By asking children to take the role of the teacher, Miss Orlette shares instructional tasks, "Mary, would you be a teacher. . .Watch me teach. . .See, say,'Good! What is this?. . .' If he doesn't know it should I tell him? Yes, tell him." Billy, the child Mary is to tutor, later becomes a 'teacher' and works with another child. There are several of these diads in the room during the morning. One child asks the teacher why they must leave their work folders open on their desks as they leave for music class. The child's question of this practice and the teacher's response, "It makes my job easier." is an indication that control of operations is open to discussion. Clean up time shows the teacher and the children jointly in control. Children and teacher straighten the room. Kathy cleans the teacher's desk and reminds Miss Orlette not to "mess it up". There is a Question Chair in this classroom, but Miss Orlette is not consistent about its use, forgetting it as the morning progresses. This inconsistency indicates a pull toward permitting children a less formal access to the teacher during work time.

Although she is clearly attuned to the child's intellectual growth, Miss Orlette's interest and control extends beyond the child as student in this work period. The social and emotional realms enter into the morning and are apparently a part of Miss Orlette's concern. She arranges for an early morning recess period until buses arrive, allows quiet conversations as children do work assignments, and provides opportunities for children to work together in diads. This indicates that she places some importance on social growth at school.

Miss Orlette also addresses the emotional growth of her pupils. She takes into account how children feel, e.g., when giving directions about how to tutor Billy, she says, "Don't stay on the hard ones 'cause he'll feel bad. . ." And, in dealing with Mary's problem: "You did not do your job. I'm unhappy about it.

When you don't know what to do you cry. That's not good. . .It's not that I don't love you, but I don't like what you did." Miss Orlette's response to Joe's report that "Mary is crying again" is firm: "Joe, I do not want that discussed! That's a behavior she should subtract!" Resolutions to the whole child v. child as student dilemma fall largely toward the whole child in this classroom.

The Two Worktimes Compared

In both these classrooms the locus of control rests largely with the teacher, and yet, the two mornings contrast sharply. Miss Orlette's focus on the whole child allows a more informal atmosphere than the formality of Mrs. Reiss's child as student focus. Children are permitted to socialize as they work in Miss Orlette's class; they are expected to work without talk, quickly and alone in Mrs. Reiss's. Miss Orlette's children appear to have more autonomy over time and operations, i.e., they control the sequence and pace at which they do their work. Mrs. Reiss requires completion of a prescribed amount of work in a specified sequence during the work period. Miss Orlette's dominant resolution in regard to standards for reading relates to "mastery". For Mrs. Reiss, it appears to be amount and speed of reading work completed. While no one attempts to by-pass the Question Chair in Mrs. Reiss's class, the children in Miss Orlette's class ignore the Question Chair through most of the morning. A child asks Miss Orlette why they must leave folders open on desks, but we do not see a child initiate questions about teacher established routines in Mrs. Reiss's class.

The distinctions and similarities between these two teachers become more clear when we look at their resolutions which are exceptions to overall patterns. For instance, in relation to reading, Miss Orlette displays a strong pattern of resolution for the whole child, permitting social interaction throughout the morning, arranging diads for reading practice, suggesting children watch as another child "masters" his reading, etc. And yet, her direct reading instruction is

confined (in this morning, at least) to individual, rather than group instruction. She calls no "reading group" to her table. This can be a reflection of conflicting views operating within Miss Orlette: although children need to interact to learn, she must teach them how to "master" reading individually. Mrs. Reiss's rationale for reading group instruction (at least during this morning session) appears to fit her pattern of child as student efficiency, since we do not see her acknowledge contributions and interactions that stem from the group instruction. Her interaction with Cassandra over what to read at reading time — although consistent in that it supports the teacher's control over operations — presents a contradiction to Cassandra in regard to what is meant by "reading". There are some exceptions to the businesslike, child as student resolutions which tend to dominate Mrs. Reiss's morning. The incident in which children tape their lunch change to the chalkboard, writing and erasing their names is a case in point. She allows them access to her desk without asking permission to get the tape. Mrs. Reiss does not intrude on the event, though their playful manner clearly differs from her expectation for operations through the balance of the morning. Normally, no one is allowed to leave his/her seat without permission — unless enroute to the Question Chair. It may be that because the children maintain her standard for quiet during the incident she finds it acceptable. It also may be that this apparent contradiction indicates "second thoughts" in relation to the whole child, child as student dilemma -- that she feels pulled toward allowing children some autonomy, allowing some of the social realm of childhood to enter her classroom.

Additional instances of teacher behavior contradictory to dominant patterns of resolution surface during the morning session. When Miss Orlette, who normally has an informal manner attends to Mary's emotional needs, she reacts in an abrupt and formal manner. When attending to Bonnie's physical needs, Mrs. Reiss, who is usually quite formal reacts in a soft, informal manner.

What we see here are two teachers whose apparent differences, as manifested in their dominant resolutions to the dilemmas, become less distinct as we look at their exceptional resolutions. These exceptional resolutions reveal the complexity and seemingly contradictory nature of the teachers' dilemma resolutions.

First Grade As Cassandra Sees It

In this section I attempt to show the connections between teachers' resolutions to the dilemmas of schooling and the meanings children take from school experience. I focus on Cassandra's view of first grade and its relationship to Mrs. Reiss's resolutions to the control dilemmas. The discussion relates to two points in time: before the school year begins and during the third week of September.

Before school starts, Cassandra's immediate response to my question, "What do you think first grade will be like?" is: "Hard work." This is quickly followed by: "But, not too hard for me!" Although unsure of just what "hard work" is, she says there will be more of it than the "play" she remembers from Kindergarten. Cassandra is responsive throughout the meeting and appears relaxed. She initiates an account of reading to her brother in the evening and early morning. It appears that the book, In A People House and the experience of reading it to him have some special meaning for her. (She refers to this book again in the September and January transcripts.) "That's the first book that made me learn how to read some things, you know." Reading it to her brother seems to be something they both enjoy and look forward to. Cassandra has obviously experienced success as she "sounded out and stuff like that" -- her explanation of how she is learning to read by herself. At this point, she likes to read "A very lot!"

From this account, it is plausible to say that before school begins Cassandra experiences reading as an activity which brings her pleasure. The personal investment required in the task of learning to read by herself indicates

some degree of autonomy. She applies herself without being asked or required to do so. Apparently, reading has a meaningful part in her life.

Cassandra is a first grader for three weeks when we meet the second time. The impact of these first weeks is apparent in her attitude and view of school. She says first grade is ". . .hard, hard, hard for a first grader who just started."

Cassandra reacts strongly to Mrs. Reiss's dominant pattern of resolution which favors teacher control. Things are "kind of bossy" in school. "It's so awfully mean in there (whispers) with Mrs. Reiss -- but don't tell her that!" Although she cheers when I reassure her that our conversation will be confidential, she looks out the window checking for anyone who might overhear us. Her tone of voice and facial expression show that while this action is somewhat playful, it is somewhat serious as well. Cassandra is quite clear about her dislike for Mrs. Reiss's control over how fast work should be done: "I don't like when other people have to stay inside and finish all their work by theirselves!" The problem with school, she says, is "work!" My reminder of her before school projection that first grade would have "Hard work. . .but not too hard for me!" elicits what seems at first to be disbelief, then acknowledgement that this is indeed what she expected, and finally, what could be disappointment in herself, since she has difficulty finishing assignments on time. Mrs. Reiss's control over time is stated explicitly: "Cassandra, don't waste so much time. Sit down. Cassandra, if I were you I'd hurry up a bit, huh?" Cassandra's conversation with the child behind her is apparently unacceptable behavior for reading work time. Pencils must be sharpened quickly so that she can return to work and not face working alone during recess. Cassandra is expected to focus on her work only, ignoring social interactions.

Another area of concern for Cassandra relates to control over what she can read: "You just can't read anything, you know. That's what I hate about it!"

To my question, "How is reading going?" her first response appears flat and bored — "Not good.", but this quickly changes to a lively, "Can I read some stuff to you?" when she realizes that she can select what to read. "We read Pig in Jig books. But, I'm not going to read that book to you. I'm going to read from home In a People House. That's my favorite book." Notes from the classroom observation reveal an interaction with Mrs. Reiss which relates here:

Mrs. Reiss: It's reading time, children. Everybody get to work.

(The children are occupied with work sheets, work book assignments and basal readers. Cassandra is reading a book which she brought from home.)

Mrs. Reiss: Cassandra, what is that you are doing?

Cassandra: I'm reading.

Mrs. Reiss: What is that?

Cassandra: It's my book, In a People House.

Mrs. Reiss: Put that away and do your reading, Cassandra. You have lots to do in your folder and two pages in your workbook.

(Cassandra looks puzzled. She says nothing. Mrs. Reiss repeats what she said.)

Mrs. Reiss: Put that away and do your reading. You have lots to do in your folder and two pages in your workbook.

(Cassandra puts her book away, opens her work-sheet folder and begins to write.)

This interaction confirms what Cassandra says in our conversation — that she "just can't read anything" at reading time. She must do what Mrs. Reiss calls 'reading'.

Following Mead's conception that 'meaning' (1934, p. 75), "arises and lies within the field of relation. . .", it is plausible to infer that Cassandra takes meaning from this incident. She takes Mrs. Reiss's meaning, i.e., that in first

grade, on this morning, "reading" means teacher selected, paper/pencil work -- not "reading" a book from home. Cassandra sees that "reading" at school for Mrs. Reiss is different from "reading" at home for her brother. Because Mrs. Reiss's pattern of resolution (at least for now) tends to favor the child as student, she has not yet come to know Cassandra's feeling for and history with her book from home. Over time, it is possible that Mrs. Reiss's dominant pattern of resolutions to the control dilemmas may change, or her exceptional resolutions may yield further understanding of Cassandra as a whole child.

And so, in the third week of school, we can begin to see the impact of Mrs. Reiss's resolutions to control dilemmas on Cassandra. First grade is not what she expects. The book she reads at home is not appropriate reading at school. Reading is a series of teacher selected tasks to be done within a given time period. School is a place where she has little autonomy or input. Work is all important. It must be done quickly, quietly and alone. It must be completed before she can play. The teacher decides what work and how work is to be done. Work is "hard" to do.

This sample analysis illustrates the connections between teachers' dilemma resolutions and the meanings children take from school experience. From what we see here, it is plausible to say that Cassandra's idea of reading is changing. Before school starts she speaks of reading as something pleasurable which she chooses to do -- something she does for herself (as well as her brother). In the third week of school, she speaks of reading as something over which she has no control -- something that is done to her. As I analyze the remaining data, Cassandra's early reactions will be subject to further qualification. At this point, it is too soon to tell what effect these early impressions will have on Cassandra's view of reading and school generally or whether she maintains this view over the first grade year. Many questions grow out of this analysis, e.g., how will Mrs. Reiss's dilemma resolutions vary as the year progresses?

Will Cassandra adapt to her teacher's resolutions? Will she find ways to question them?

To remain within the confines of this working paper, I do not attempt a discussion of cultural transmission. However, the sample analysis does provide examples of how certain aspects of society become reproduced in schools. Although I do not discuss the societal or curriculum dilemmas in this analysis, there are conceptions implicit in the control dilemmas regarding both. The control dilemmas reveal the relationship of younger to older members of society, for example. They also give indications of what constitutes knowledge and learning. The discussion shows there are contradictions in the behavior of these two teachers. These contradictions represent opposing pulls that, on the one hand, draw them toward the reproduction of our culture, and on the other, toward change.

Summary and Conclusion

In this working paper I describe a study of the meanings ten children take from the schooling process and the experience of being taught to read in first grade. It is also a case study of cultural transmission, i.e. of how schools, through the selection and presentation of 'knowledge' in the form of curriculum, participate in cultural reproduction and change. The study represents an effort to connect curriculum theory to an empirical research study. I take a particular view of reading -- one in which the reader has an active role not only decoding and comprehending the author's words, but relating them to the reader's personal knowledge and experience.

With this "critical literacy" as a focus, I look at the first grade experience of ten children who attend the same school. Although their classrooms and reading programs are virtually identical, their teachers similar in age and teaching experience, learning to read in these two classrooms proves to be a distinctly different experience. Indeed, the notion of what reading is appears to be different.

By tracing the teachers' patterns of resolution to the "dilemmas of schooling", I attempt to show the impact of teachers' actions on children's developing perceptions of schooling and learning to read -- of learning and knowledge in general.

Because of the preliminary nature of the data analysis reported in this working paper, I make no attempt to report findings at this time. Still, we can see the effect of these two teacher's dilemma resolutions on the learning climate. We have indications of one child's conception of schooling and reading and how the meanings she takes from her experience in first grade change over time. What she has known as "reading" and "work" changes during the first few weeks of school.

As I compare the children's experience in these two classrooms, I hope to expand our understanding of the impact of the schooling process on learners and their perceptions of school learning. I hope to call attention to the importance not only <u>that</u> our children read, but how they are taught to read and what reading comes to mean to them.

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